

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

MAY 19, 2011

PRESENT: Diane Ripple, Joe Vitale, Katie Miller, James Pearson, Barb Holtz, Raquel Mehring, Don Harris, Linda Sumwalt, Sarah Matson, Ed Cohen, Amy Baumann, Nichole Hunkins

STAFF PRESENT: Pete Slesar, Mary Anderson, Antwayne Robertson, Eve Altizer, Don Daniels

Diane Ripple called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Joe Vitale made a motion, seconded by Raquel Mehring, to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2011 meeting.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Joe reported he had been out of town and has missed a couple meetings. Going back to the Children and Family Services Advisory Committee presentation to the Board, he reported it was outstanding, direct and to the point. It really hit on budget concern points as well.

Last week he attended a lunch meeting with County Executive Dan Vrakas where there was good, positive dialog. Dan is very supportive and appreciative of what we do. Joe reported that he attempted to emphasize the amount of work done this year by CAFSAC in terms of inter-agency communication and avoiding duplication. The County Executive is very concerned with wanting to see an effort of consolidation among agencies. This would not be easy as each agency has its own board. Joe advised being pro-active, in at least looking at it, rather than burying our heads in the sand and having something imposed. Joe recommended putting this on the table and reviewing it. The result might be we looked at it and it's not feasible, but he urged looking into it.

Joe stated how wonderful it is to see Linda Sumwalt at the meeting today. He has worked with her for a number of years, and wished her a happy retirement.

HOMELESSNESS/WAUKESHA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Linda Sumwalt, Waukesha School District, was introduced. She stated she's happy to be here and for the opportunity to speak to the group. She has worked with the school district for twenty-five years. Since 2003, she has been the homeless liaison with the district. She brought with her the presentation that she shows their staff and other agencies and community groups about homelessness in the schools. It helps explain the homeless mandate and how they identify the

homeless. She is a coordinator in student services. The district recently appointed an administrator to address homelessness in the schools, so there won't be a gap when she retires.

There is a need to know about this in order to break down barriers and provide the best care for students. Statistics were given for the number of homeless students in each school year since the inception of this program. In 2003-2004 there were 64 students and in 2009-2010 there were 125 students identified as homeless. This year 107 students have been identified so far who have been homeless at one time or another, and they expect 150 by the end of the year.

Some causes behind homelessness are lack of affordable housing, low wages, unemployment, domestic violence, illness, mental health issues, or addiction of a parent or guardian. There are also unaccompanied youth, that is youth not in the custody of a parent or guardian because of physical or sexual abuse by a parent or guardian, neglect, domestic violence, mental health, parental substance abuse, or family conflict. In the school district, they enroll and service the student; they do not demand proof of address.

The McKinney-Vento Law states that children or youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence are homeless. This mandate can be downloaded from the internet. What does the law mean for the school district? They need to look for families who are sharing housing, living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds, living in emergency or transitional shelters, abandoned buildings, or cars. Migratory children who are living like this are also viewed as homeless.

These were defined on the presentation; Enroll or enrollment is the right to attend class and participate in school activities. School of origin is the school that the student attended when permanently housed. Comparable services are services offered to other students in the school selected. Students have the right to attend the school of origin and Linda helps find transportation to make that happen. They provide lunch and supplies needed for classes. She explained transportation services. Children can walk to school if they stay in a shelter located in the immediate area of the school they are attending, and it's where other students would be walking.

What it means to be homeless; there may be no rules or responsibility, such as chores, in the shelter, and there is no access to your possessions. They attempt to remove barriers for families and students relating to their physical needs, health and medical care, and financial hardship.

The goal is to have staff sensitive and aware. Students might be unable to complete assignments. They want teachers to consider trauma, access to things like clean clothes and a shower, loss of academic progress, high mobility rate of children without homes prevents them from receiving appropriate and necessary assessments. Homeless kids might not adapt to traditional classroom settings. They try to intervene and help with transportation, but there might not be transportation available for after school activities. They try to prevent dropping out of high school, due to missed work or lost credits due to excessive absences and frequent moves. Children who don't have access to their parents' financial information cannot complete the FAFSA forms necessary for college financial aid. They have seen more requests from social workers and counselors to get help for get kids interested in college.

What can staff do to increase student success at school? Be aware and flexible. When basic needs are met, there is success. They give tips to teachers, i.e. make the student feel welcome, don't assign group projects or internet assignments; don't penalize a homeless kid for being late; help them participate in field trips, maintain student's privacy, be respectful when asking about their situation, do not promote "sleepovers" in the classroom, and realize that asking for an address would be difficult.

They reach out to parents. They have many services offered within the community. They try to be pro-active in searching for tutoring options if needed and make education the priority.

Resources were listed, including the homeless liaison, social workers can help find resources, and the school district can help with transportation. The transportation piece is huge. They wrote for a grant two years ago and the transportation piece has taken up much of it. Other than the grant, there are no funds. McKinney Vento is an unfunded mandate.

The slide presentation ended, and there was a question/answer period. Don Harris asked what was meant by transportation. She said they look for the most economic way for students living in a shelter away from their home school, they look for a bus route. For a student going between districts, they might give a gas card each week to the parent to provide the transportation, or contract with an agency such as Go kid Go, or a big bus service, which could run into a new route and this is most costly. They're looking into maybe purchasing some vans and building something more economical. Don Harris asked how many of the 125 to 150 homeless students, how many qualify as special needs? Linda answered about one fifth or less are children with disabilities, and that does have an impact, because they can maintain the child in the school of origin. Linda reported on student she is serving, previously homeless in an alternative setting and they're not sure they can meet her needs. They're getting other options ready for her. There are not a lot of programs for girls. It is a difficult need to meet.

Joe stated that being born and raised in Waukesha, he was not aware there was a homeless population in Waukesha, until someone brought a sixth grader living in a car to his attention. He explained that Linda not only places these children in a school, but also goes beyond by finding the right teacher for the child. Joe asked what the age breakdown is. Linda answered 3 years through high school. Joe asked if they are allowed to share with teachers the fact that a student is homeless, and Linda answered, yes, it is something the teacher should understand and made considerations for. Mary Anderson, Public Health, reported having been aware of newborns living in cars.

There was discussion about budget concerns. Linda acknowledged budget issues, but she knows that the professionals and citizens involved are not going to let kids fall through the cracks. She expects more creativity to provide what's needed, hopefully with greater cost savings.

Pete Slesar asked if she's gotten feedback from teachers as to how these kids' peers treat them. She answered she does know it's hard and their efforts are to be supportive. They're studying trauma informed care in the district and there is greater training coming in the next year. Bullying is a present concern, and there's a need to understand that and deal with it by providing

the support and tools necessary. Joe believes there's a relationship to where the kid is placed also. She responded that is another reason to keep kids in their school of origin, so they maintain that connection.

Don Harris asked what the top three issues are. Linda said connecting kids with after school activities, girls in special needs is a service gap, transportation is a concern, and there is always more that can be done to promote parent involvement. Housing is an issue as there are currently waiting lists for shelters.

PARTNERSHIPS

Diane Ripple directed that the group would table this agenda item for next time. Diane reminded agencies to get their info to Julie for the collaboration spreadsheet.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Don Daniels reported in the absence of Jesús Mireles. He became involved in this committee a couple years ago. He saw that there was not enough parent participation. He and Jesús targeted and established getting a parent chair and co-chair. The committee now has over the required minimum of 51% parent participation. There are parents on the committee that could not attend meetings because of them having children who have special needs. We continue to send them the meeting minutes. The committee has combined with Birth to 3. They now have a viable committee, having parents whose child started in Birth to 3 and have continued in Family Support. There is now an educational segment, and at the meeting scheduled today, they will have a speaker from ARC in Madison to talk about the governors' new budget affects on children with special needs. They have revised the letter to parents explaining the parental cost share, making it more understandable and friendly, as well as other program changes. Funding for the Family Support Program is about \$225,000 per year (and that amount hasn't changed in years) and there are 400 kids applying for that money. They used to give qualifying kids the maximum of \$3000 each, and now they can give less. This allows them to serve more families. They have talked about lowering the cap even more to stretch the funds even further. Don Harris asked what the source of the money is. Don Daniels answered that it comes from the State, earmarked for this program.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Eve Altizer announced that the NAMI Waukesha walk is this Saturday. It is not too late to join. It takes place at 11:00 a.m. at Frame Park. NAMI does incredible work in the community for citizens with mental illness. There are a lot of employees and teams participating. More information can be found on the internet.

James Pearson indicated that he will be distributing flyers on an upcoming mini golf fundraiser.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on June 16th, 2011 at 8:3 a.m. in the Board Room of the Human Services Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Joe Vitale motioned to adjourn, seconded by Don Harris at 9:37 a.m.

Approved on: 6-16-11
date